



## Best Native Plants for Landscapes

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This publication discusses native Hawaiian plants for use in landscapes. A plant is considered *native* if it arrived in Hawai'i without the assistance of man. Plants that are native to Hawai'i may also occur elsewhere—a native plant is considered *indigenous* if it is found in other places as well. Some native plants, however, are *endemic*—they occur naturally only in the Hawaiian Islands.

Native plants used in landscaping should be both aesthetically attractive and easily maintained. Because aesthetic taste varies considerably among individuals, and because many native Hawaiian plants are not widely adaptable and may be difficult to maintain, the plants suggested here are included based on the author's personal taste and standards for ease of maintenance in landscapes.

Recently the erythrina gall wasp has been extremely damaging to most *Erythrina* species including the native *Erythrina sandwicensis*, which has been valuable for dry-area plantings. It is possible that biological control may eventually be effective in controlling the gall wasp.

My ten favorite native plants for landscapes are *Acacia koaia*, *Cordia subcordata*, *Dodonaea viscosa*, *Gardenia brighamii*, *Hibiscus calyphyllus*, *Metrosideros polymorpha*, *Myoporum sandwicense*, *Pritchardia martii*, *Sapindus saponaria*, and *Scaevola taccada*. The list of native plants for landscaping that follows is not complete, and you can add or subtract according to your preference.

### Native plants for landscaping

*Acacia koa* (koa)  
*Acacia koaia* (koa'i'a)  
*Bacopa monnieri* (bacopa)  
*Brighamia insignis* ('ōlulu)  
*Cibotium glaucum* (Hawaiian tree fern)  
*Cibotium menziesii* (hāpu'u)

*Cordia subcordata* (kou)  
*Dodonaea viscosa* ('a'ali'i)  
*Erythrina sandwicensis* (wiliwili)  
*Gardenia brighamii* (nānū)  
*Freycinetia arborea* ('ie'ie)  
*Heliotropium anomalum* (hinahina)  
*Hibiscus arnottianus* var. *punaluuensis*  
(koki'o ke'oke'o)  
*Hibiscus calyphyllus* (ma'o hao hele)  
*Hibiscus clayi* (H. Clay hibiscus)  
*Hibiscus kokio* subsp. *Saintjohnianus* (hā'ena red)  
*Ipomoea pes-caprae*  
*Jacquemontia ovalifolia* subsp. *Sandwicensis*  
(pā'ū o Hi'iaka)  
*Metrosideros polymorpha* ('ōhi'a lehua)  
*Myoporum sandwicense* (naio)  
*Nephrolepis cordifolia* (kupukupu)  
*Osteomeles anthyllidifolia* ('ūlei)  
*Pandanus tectorius* (pandanus)  
*Pittosporum confertiflorum* (hō'awa)  
*Pittosporum hosmeri* (hō'awa)  
*Portulaca molokiniensis* ('ihi)  
*Pritchardia glabrata*  
*Pritchardia hillebrandii*  
*Pritchardia martii*  
*Pritchardia remota*  
*Psilotum nudum* (moa)  
*Psydrax odorata* (alahe'e)  
*Sadleria cyatheoides* ('ama'u)  
*Sapindus saponaria* (mānele, Hawaiian soapberry)  
*Scaevola taccada* (beach naupaka)  
*Sida fallax* ('illima papa)  
*Tetraplasandra hawaiiensis* ('ohe'ohe)  
*Vigna marina* (nanea)  
*Vitex rotundifolia* (beach vitex)  
*Wikstroemia uva-ursi* ('ākia)



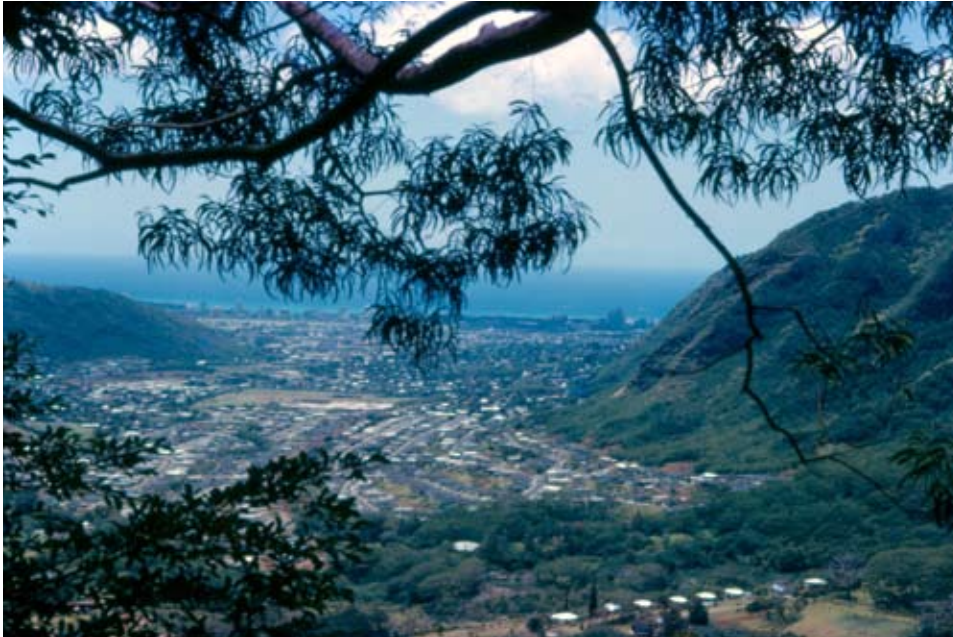
*Scaevola taccada*, beach naupaka, is hardy and so often used that many landscapers do not think of it as a native plant.



*Metrosideros polymorpha*, 'ōhi'a, is a very attractive tree that has been used in the landscape industry for many years. A rust (*Puccinia psidii*) has recently become a problem for 'ōhi'a.







*Acacia koaia* is a smaller version of Hawai'i's native *Acacia koa* that has been difficult to grow at lower elevations. The rust disease *Fusarium oxysporum* f. sp. *koae* may be a problem, although many other diseases can also be involved. Both Dr. Priscilla Millen of Leeward Community College and Dr. Janice Uchida of the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa thought some *Acacia koa* varieties might be resistant to the problems that cause these koa species to succumb at lower elevations. Millen showed me an *Acacia koa* (above) at Leeward Community College that was doing fine.



Some pritchardia palms are endemic. *Pritchardia martii* (right) has been used on O'ahu to a certain extent because it is attractive and can be found at the Lyon Arboretum.



*P. hillebrandii* (above, left) also can be found at Lyon Arboretum. *P. glabrata* has been planted to advantage around the cafeteria at the Maui Community College. *P. remota* has been similarly planted in the Sherman Laboratory courtyard at UH Mānoa. But *P. pacifica* (above, right) and *P. thurstonii* (right), which are not native, are still used the most by the landscape industry. Twenty-three *Pritchardia* palms are listed as endemic and native. The *P. affinis* located on the Mānoa campus near Pope Laboratory is not very attractive.







Palm aphid (above and right) and *Rhabdoscelus obscurus* (sugarcane weevil borer, damage shown below) have damaged *Pritchardii* species, particularly when bagasse was used as mulch.







*Nephrolepis cordifolia*, kupukupu fern (above), is hardy and attractive when first planted, but it turns brown when it closes in and competes aggressively with itself. It is very difficult and expensive to thin.



*Cordia subcordata*, kou (flowers above, in a landscape below), is a medium-size tree that creates a thick shade and can take dry conditions. The wood is used by woodworkers to make attractive, light colored bowls and other sculptures.





*Osteomeles anthyllidifolia*, 'ūlei, is a low-growing shrub with small, shiny, dark green leaves; it is adapted to dry areas.



*Psydrax odorata*, alahe'e, can be pruned into a hedge and has flowers that are fragrant. A soft green scale (below) can be a problem.







*Heliotropium anomalum*, hinahina, is very attractive when found in rocky areas close to the ocean, but it is very difficult to duplicate the same environment in most landscapes.



*Wikstroemia uva-ursi*, 'ākia, is often used as a landscape plant, but it tends to be straggly when allowed to grow high. It should be maintained as a low groundcover to be attractive. It also suffers from nematodes and spider mites. Organic growers can use a water mist on a timer at the hottest time of the day to help control the spider mites.







*Jacquemontia ovalifolia* subsp. *sandwicensis*, pā'ū o Hi'iaka (above), *Ipomoea pes-caprae*, beach morning-glory (above right and at right), and *Vigna marina* (nanea) are attractive, sprawling groundcovers if they can be grown to fill their area without gaps. Beach morning-glory needs good drainage or it will suffer from a root rot. Nanea has attractive, very dark green foliage.







*Sida fallax*, ‘illima papa, is used more in landscaping lately because it is easy to grow if insect pests are controlled. A variety from Kaua’i has attractive, dark green foliage.

*Sapindus saponaria*, mānele, or Hawaiian soapberry, (right) is a hardy tree adapted to dry locations. It does not seem to have many problems. You can find one at Ala Moana Beach Park.



*Psilotum nudum*, moa, has been used as a groundcover.





*Pandanus tectorius*, pandanus, (fruit above right) is often found close to beaches. It has problems with whitefly and mealybug. The leaves are used to make lauhala mats, hats, and other craft items.



*Dodonaea viscosa*, 'a'ali'i, is a hardy, attractive small tree adapted to dry areas.





*Myoporum sandwicense*, naio, is a hardy, attractive small trees adapted to dry areas.



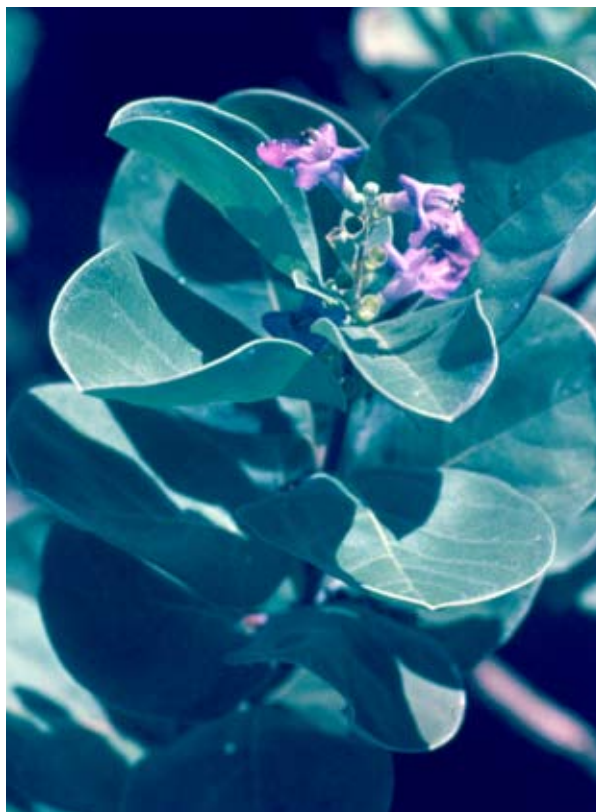
*Hibiscus calyphyllus*, ma'o hao hele, or Rock's Kaua'i hibiscus, (above) is an attractive groundcover with yellow flowers having an internal dark purple color. *Hibiscus arnottianus* var. *punaluuensis* is an attractive white hibiscus with some fragrance. *Hibiscus clayi*, H. Clay hibiscus (below), is an attractive red hibiscus, and *Hibiscus kokio* subsp. *Saintjohnianus* is an attractive orange hibiscus.







*Tetraplasandra hawaiiensis*, 'ohe, has an interesting form; it can be found at Lyon Arboretum, and it does well in similar wet areas.



*Vitex rotundifolia*, beach vitex, can be pruned as a hedge.



*Portulaca molokiniensis*, with a rosette of succulent leaves, and *Brighamia insignis*, 'ōlulu (right) are ground-covers that are unique and attractive.



*Bacopa monnieri* (above) is a common groundcover. It can take sunny and salty areas, but it suffers from a *Rhizoctonia* disease (above, right).

Of the species not illustrated, *Gardenia brighamii* (nanu) is popular because of the fragrance of its flowers, which are similar to those of Tahitian gardenia. *Pittosporum confertiflorum* (hō'awa) and *Pittosporum hosmeri* (ho'awa) are hardy, attractive small trees adapted to dry areas. *Cibotium glaucum* (Hawaiian tree fern), *C. menziesii* (hāpu'u), and *Freycinetia arborea* ('ie'ie) will do well at high elevations and in wet areas. *Sadleria syatheoides* ('ama'u) is a fern with a red frond that can take a lot of sun.

## Resources

- Bornhorst, Heidi L., and Fred D. Rauch. 1994. Native Hawaiian plants for landscaping, conservation, and reforestation. University of Hawaii, College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources, Research Extension Series 142. An online version is at [www.ctahr.hawaii.edu/oc/freepubs/pdf/OF-30.pdf](http://www.ctahr.hawaii.edu/oc/freepubs/pdf/OF-30.pdf).
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